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ABSTRACT

Noting that educating children requires commitment and resources from the whole community as well as the schools, this document explores school-based collaborations with social services and family programs to improve students' performance. The document first provides a rationale for school-linked programs, then describes the School-Linked Services division of the National Resource Center for Family Support Programs, which collects and disseminates information and provides technical support to help establish projects to improve school outcomes for children through strong partnerships with parents, social service agencies, and other community resources. Next, it describes the Family Resource Coalition, a national membership organization dedicated to communicating the premise, promise, and practice of family support, and of which the School-Linked Services division is a part. The paper then describes five school-based efforts: (1) Family Resource and Youth Service Centers Program, Kentucky, which empowers communities to coordinate social and health services for youth and families through school-based centers; (2) the Beacons Initiative, New York, which offers basic services necessary to keep youth successful in school and safe in the neighborhoods, as well as innovative programs that stretch kids' potential even further; (3) the San Jose, California's Franklin-McKinley School District's practice of housing, in its administration building, service providers in areas including health and dental care, marriage and family counseling, truancy court, legal aid, and child care; (4) Family Resource Schools, Denver (Colorado), offering more than 30 services and programs intended to prevent school failure and enhance school readiness, increase parent involvement, and relieve the stress of families; and (5) Vaughn Next Century Learning Center, in San Fernando, California, which combines school-based health and social services and quality child care. The paper also lists characteristics common to family support programs. (HTH)

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School-Linked Services

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Why School-Linked Programs?

Communities around the country are recognizing that educating children requires commitment and resources from the whole community, not only from schools. No one teacher, parent, service provider, school, or government agency can provide all the things children need for healthy development. Efforts to link schools, families, and communities are based on the premise that as partners, they can educate children while enriching their lives, their families, their schools, and their communities.

Educators are seeking ways to improve students' performance by removing hindrances such as poverty, violence, and poor health that keep students from succeeding. Teachers already recognize the importance of involving parents in children's education and the difference that a family's support of the educational process can make.

Parents welcome accessible services that support them in their roles as parents and providers, and they appreciate the opportunity to participate in their children's education in a meaningful way.

For social service providers, schools are a logical base from which to provide services. Schools are local and accessible to all families, and they are one place where all children go. In addition, a student's academic success is an important indicator that he or she will be at reduced risk for poverty, poor health, violence, and the problems related to them, which makes service providers directly invested in the academic success of children.

The common investment that parents, social service providers, and educators all have in increased educational outcomes is culminating in school-based collaborations that benefit children, families, and communities.

School-Linked Services. A Division of the National Resource Center for Family Support Programs

Teachers, parents, practitioners, and other innovators of school-linked collaborations face many challenges. Differing goals, visions, vocabularies, and means of service delivery can be barriers to successful partnership. There is little historical precedent of these groups working together, and there are few resources to support their efforts.

To meet these challenges, in 1991, the Family Resource Coalition established the School-Linked Services Division of the National Resource Center for Family Support Programs. Funded by the Danforth Foundation, the Division collects and disseminates information and provides technical support to help establish successful school-linked collaborations—projects that seek to improve school outcomes for children through strong partnerships with parents, social service agencies, and other community resources. The Division:

- Collects up-to-date information on successful collaborative models and maintains this information on a computer database
- Provides technical assistance via telephone, written correspondence, computer modem, and visits to local programs, policymakers, and national planners
- Publishes materials relevant to program developers and practitioners
- Disseminates information through the publications of the Family Resource Coalition: *FRC Report*, a quarterly journal; and the *Connection*, a bimonthly newsletter
- Helps school systems and human service systems design interdisciplinary staff development and training programs to ensure successful implementation of school reform efforts.

The Family Resource Coalition

The Family Resource Coalition is a national membership organization dedicated to communicating the premise, promise, and practice of family support.

The School-Linked Services Division is part of the Family Resource Coalition's commitment to building programs that strengthen and empower families, enhance the capacities of parents, and foster the optimal development of children and youth. The Family Resource Coalition embraces several principles that inform any family supportive program model:

- The relationship between program and family is one of equality and respect. The program's first priority is to establish and maintain this relationship as the vehicle through which growth and change can occur.
- Participants are a vital resource. Programs facilitate parents' ability to serve as resources to each other, to participate in program decisions and governance, and to advocate for themselves in the broader community.
- Programs are community-based and culturally and socially relevant to the families they serve. Programs are often a bridge between families and other services outside the scope of the program.
- Parent education, information about human development, and skill building for parents are essential elements of every program.
- Programs are voluntary, and seeking support and information is viewed as a sign of family strength, not as an indication of deficits and problems.

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Family Support At-A-Glance

- **Family support programs are open to all families. While offering universal access to the program within communities, family support programs may also target populations within communities and provide special outreach to these groups.**

- **Family support emphasizes building skills. Parent education classes help build family strengths and support networks, and encourage parents to develop life skills and an understanding of child development.**

- **Family support takes a holistic view of families and their needs. By linking with other human service providers in a community as well as by tailoring their own services to meet the needs of participating families, family support programs advocate a comprehensive approach to providing services to families.**

- **Family support programs operate in diverse settings. They may be located in community centers, schools, hospitals, or freestanding centers. Many programs also offer in-home services.**

- **Family support programs begin by building relationships. Programs engage families where they are. Staff work to earn families' trust and to maintain and develop relationships over time. Family support programs also create a flexible environment that can respond to changing needs of families and staff.**

- **Family support programs work in sync with communities. Because programs are sensitive to the fact that families operate within and are affected by the communities in which they live, family support programs address community issues as well as family issues and encourage parents to be active participants in their communities.**

Following are five models of school-linked programs that utilize family support tenets to respond to the needs of students and their families.

Family Resource and Youth Service Centers Program

Kentucky

One of the nation's most ambitious education initiatives, Kentucky's Family Resource and Youth Service Centers Program empowers communities to coordinate social and health services for youth and their families through school-based centers. Kentucky's Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990 authorized support for Family Resource and Youth Service Centers in all elementary and high schools in which at least 20 percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch. Although Centers provide some services directly, they concentrate mostly on giving families access to providers outside the Center, and work closely with state agencies to identify and effectively respond to gaps in services. Both the Youth Service Centers and the Family Resource Centers view families holistically, but Youth Service Centers devote most of their attention to problems youth encounter as they enter adolescence and adulthood.

Family Resource Centers provide:

- Childcare (full-time preschool, care for two-to-three-year-olds, and after-school care for children four to 12)
- Classes for new and expectant parents
- Family literacy program (PACE)
- Support and training for childcare providers
- Parent-child activities
- Referrals to health and social services

Youth Service Centers provide:

- Employment services
- Summer and part-time job development
- Family crisis and mental health counseling
- Drug and alcohol abuse counseling
- Referrals to health and social services

From 133 centers in 1992, the Program has expanded to serve families at 636 schools through 373 centers. Because families' and youths' needs vary from community to community, Centers vary in providing services

beyond the core required by the Family Resource and Youth Service Centers Program. Some coordinate family and after-school recreational programs and volunteer programs, act as information clearinghouses, assess needs, and coordinate with the local legal system and school officials.

The annual budget for the statewide program is $26.4 million. Each Center functions on a different budget; the minimum amount granted a Center in 1993 was $12,800 and the maximum was $90,000. The average was $69,000. Centers supplement these state grants with funds from other sources, such as in-kind and cash donations from the school board and the community.

The Beacons Initiative
New York, NY

Why are so many kids in New York staying after school? Music workshops, dances, computer labs, and teen father groups are just a few answers.

Since the City of New York began funding school-based services through the Beacons initiative in 1991, youth and their families in all 32 school districts have gained easier access to resources to combat the effects of crime, AIDS, and substance abuse. One of the nation's largest city-financed projects, the Beacons have increased the hours that schools are open by 300 percent; they are open evenings, weekends, school holidays, and during the summer.

Nonprofit, community-based organizations and educational institutions compete to become Beacons sites by submitting proposals to the City. Once approved, the parent agency collaborates with an advisory council of neighborhood youth, parents, school personnel, the school board, and service providers to set up a center in the school that meets the community's needs. Service providers and programs in New York City, where space is a rare commodity, are eager to locate in schools, whose space is often underused prior to the establishment of a Beacon.

Beacons offer basic services that are necessary to keep youth successful in school and safe in their neighborhoods: libraries, homework help, health clinics, and English as a Second Language classes, to name a few. But many also offer innovative extras that help kids stretch their potential further: employment services, music workshops, drama, track and field, chorus, computer labs. Family meals, teen parent groups, and family outreach activities are common elements, as are midnight summer basketball, summer performances and workshops, teen dances, and even jazz aerobics.

Ten of the Beacons have developed joint programs with the city's Child Welfare Administration; these programs offer outreach, counseling, and practical assistance to distressed parents and engage them in supporting their children's education.

The keys to Beacons' success are manifold. A straightforward approach on the part of program administrators and an honest presentation of the scope of the services encourages trust among the community, program providers, and educators; open communication between program implementers and school staff promotes ease of space-sharing; and to compensate for the expanded hours of schools' operation, staff work in shifts, and additional security is hired.

At start-up, each Beacon receives a two-year contract grant of up to $450,000 from the City of New York Department of Youth Services, and supplements that grant with fundraising to support program expansion. The Aaron Diamond Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the J.P. Morgan, Incorporated Fund are all contributors to the Beacons.

Franklin-McKinley School District
San Jose, CA

The Franklin-McKinley School District is unique in that its administration building was designed to house many service providers within its walls. Health care, dental care, free clothing, marriage and family counseling, mental health care (with Spanish- and Vietnamese-speaking counselors), a probation officer, truancy court, legal aid, childcare, and at least thirteen other agencies and services are located on-site in a 20,000 square-foot area. The district originally provided half of the space rent-free, and made the other half available at reduced rent.

Additional occupants of the Franklin-McKinley School District building include Asian Americans for Community Involvement, Project Crackdown (the city drug abuse prevention program), the San Jose Adult and Child Guidance Clinic, an independent study center for pregnant teens and other students, a home schooling center providing resources for families who educate at home, the PTA, a community affairs office, Head Start teacher training, a costume shop for teachers, the Children's Discovery Center (which provides classroom items), a technology center, and a video production center.

The Franklin-McKinley School District has had no trouble attracting these organizations and service providers because, before building the facility, the planners widely publicized their school-linked services philosophy and their plans to implement it. The district cooperated with agencies in the planning stages (many of its staff members occupied agency boards), and the superintendent personally recruited agencies and publicized the plan to cooperate, co-locate, and, finally, collaborate. This emphasis on collaboration and teamwork from the beginning is the factor to which the district and agencies attribute their success.

In its first 14 months of operation, the $7 million

district administrative office hosted more than 18,000 people. Three children's lives were saved by medical care at the on-site clinic. The building's integrated services treated, served, and supported more than 2,000 people. The facility has made it easier to attract citizens to county- and city-sponsored meetings that are held there.

Those involved in the collaboration emphasize that although a new building such as theirs is not necessary to the success of a school-linked program, commitment to the collaborative model and philosophy is critical. They say that cities, counties, and school districts should never contemplate building a new facility without considering co-location with service providers and other organizations.

Family Resource Schools
Denver, CO

The health of a child's family and community is just as important to that child's success as the quality of his or her school experience. Guided by this principle, the Family Resource Schools (FRS) program enhances the range of programming and activities offered by seven predominantly inner-city elementary schools. A partnership of Denver Public Schools, the City of Denver, businesses, community organizations, and foundations, FRS serves 600 families a year, most of them Latino or African American.

More than 30 services and programs are offered by FRS, each with a specific goal or goals in mind. To prevent school failure and enhance school readiness, FRS coordinates community study halls with volunteer tutors, read-alongs and math and science classes for families, swimming lessons, and summer programs, among other offerings. To increase parental involvement in schools, there are Adult Basic Education, GED, ESL and Spanish as a Second Language classes; conflict management; employment and house-buying workshops; and health and nutrition programs. Peer support groups for young mothers and workshops on positive discipline, sex education, and gang prevention provide parent education whose goal is family self-sufficiency. And family growth is fostered by on-site case management, alcohol and drug abuse prevention, childcare, food and clothing banks, and mental health services, among others.

Two nights a week, the seven schools are open until 9:00 P.M. Six have rooms of their own in the school that can be used during the day. Books and videotapes may be checked out, and families can use resources such as computers and telephones on site at these six schools. A site coordinator is supervised directly by the school principal; this person, besides coordinating services and programs, often acts as case manager, fundraiser, translator, instructor, clerk, financial manager, broker of resources, appointment scheduler, chauffeur, and volunteer coordinator. This coordinator and other FRS staff maintain a relationship with social service agencies and other providers to ensure that services are not duplicated.

Implemented in 1990, FRS has experienced a change in state legislation that has eliminated its school-district funding and requires it to do extensive fundraising. Of the program's $400,000 annual budget, 89 percent comes from private sources, nine percent from the state, and two percent from federal funding.

Vaughn Next Century Learning Center
San Fernando, CA

In three years, the Vaughn Next Century Learning Center's combination of school-based health and social services and quality childcare have improved youths' chances for success; more parents are getting involved in their children's education, and youths' standardized test scores have risen 153 percent.

The Vaughn Next Century Learning Center uses two rooms in Vaughn Elementary School to provide "one-stop-shopping" for families: counseling and support groups, health screening, parent education, social and educational services for teenagers, literacy and ESL classes, legal and tax assistance, job and computer training, and day care are just some of the services families find in the small, highly maximized space. They are provided by a combination of Vaughn's 11-member staff, the staffs of other agencies, and volunteers, and are available to all area families, not just those in the Vaughn school district.

Most of the families using the services, however, live in the school district. It is an economically poor community (40 percent live below poverty) that is densely populated. The community is 83 percent Latino and 17 percent African American.

The Center is open Monday through Friday, early morning through early evening, and on weekends for special events. Outreach to parents has been active and effective; through a Service Exchange Bank, they contribute their time and talents in many areas, including childcare, transportation, tutoring, gardening, painting, and school and community governance and maintenance.

The Vaughn Next Century Learning Center's annual budget of $350,000 comes from a mix of federal, state, county, and local sources. The Center is one of the first programs in Los Angeles's FamilyCare Initiative, an effort to restructure human services toward a customer-driven model that is responsive to the city's changing demographic and other conditions.

For more information about school-linked services, contact the School-Linked Services Division of the National Resource Center for Family Support Programs: 312/341-0900. FAX: 312/341-9361.